

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 303

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (MATHIAS, CHARLES)

SUBJ: SENATOR MATHIAS' MEETING WITH FONMIN KHADDAM

1. SUMMARY. KHADDAM RECEIVED SENATOR MATHIAS FOR ONE AND ONE-HALF HOUR MEETING JAN 25. HIS PRINCIPAL POINTS WERE THAT ARABS WANTED PEACE BUT GENUINE PEACE POSSIBLE ONLY IF ISRAEL WITHDREW FROM ALL OCCUPIED TERRITORY AND GRANTED JUSTICE TO PALESTINIANS. PARTIAL SOLUTIONS OR WITHDRAWAL ON ONE FRONT WOULD NOT YIELD RESULTS AND SYRIA THOUGHT TIME HAD COME TO GO TO GENEVA. HE STRESSED SYRIAN DESIRE FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH US AND FOR UNDERSTANDING OF ITS POSITION BY US LEADERS. END SUMMARY.

2. PRINCIPAL POINTS OF SENATOR'S CORDIAL ONE AND ONE-HALF HOUR MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FOLLOW. FULL MEMCON BEING POUCHED NEA AND SENATOR MATHIAS.

3. SENATOR EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO ACCEPT FONMIN'S INVITATION, EXTENDED AT SECRETARY'S LUNCHEON LAST SUMMER, FOR HIM TO VISIT SYRIA. SENATOR SAID HE WAS COMING AS MEMBER OF APPROPRIATIONS CTE TO OBTAIN FIRST-HAND IMPRESSION OF SITUATION AND ASSURED FONMIN THAT ALL NEW FOREIGN ASSISTANCE REQUESTS WOULD HAVE TO BE JUSTIFIED. EVEN ISRAEL COULD NO
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LONGER TAKE APPROVAL AS AUTOMATIC. HE WARNED FONMIN

THAT IN FREE-SPOKEN SENATE DISCUSSION OF ASSISTANCE PROPOSALS FOR SYRIA, THERE MIGHT BE REMARKS SYRIA WOULD NOT FIND PARTICULARLY ACCEPTABLE, INCLUDING REFERENCES TO SYRIAN JEWS.

4. MATHIAS SAID HE THOUGHT ISRAEL WANTED AND NEEDED PEACE. ECONOMIC SITUATION WAS NOT GOOD AND ANOTHER ROUND OF WAR WOULD BE DISASTROUS. HE TOLD KHADDAM HE HAD WARNED RABIN THAT ANY KIND OF PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK BY ISRAEL WOULD BE VIEWED VERY SERIOUSLY BY AMERICAN PEOPLE.

5. FONMIN WELCOMED SENATOR WARMLY AND SAID SYRIA WANTED GOOD RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN PEOPLE. SYRIA WAS TRYING TO MAKE US LEADERS UNDERSTAND ME SITUATION SINCE BOTH ARAB AND AMERICAN PEOPLE WERE VICTIMS OF IT. HE SAID ARABS WANT PEACE, JUST AND DURABLE PEACE, BUT PEACE CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED AS LONG AS ISRAEL DEMONSTRATES EXPANSIONIST TENDENCIES, IGNORES UN RESOLUTIONS AND REFUSES TO WITHDRAW FROM OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORY. ALSO, ANY PEACE WHICH IGNORES TWO MILLION PALESTINIANS CANNOT BE GENUINE PEACE, FONMIN SAID. HE WARNED THAT ANY FUTURE AGGRESSION WOULD OBLIGE ARABS TO USE ALL CARDS, INCLUDING OIL AND FINANCIAL POWER, AND THEREFORE IT WAS IN INTEREST OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO PREVENT ISRAELI AGGRESSION.

6. FONMIN SAID SYRIA DID NOT TAKE RECENT US THREATS AND STATEMENTS ON USE OF FORCE SERIOUSLY AS HE KNEW US WOULD NOT WANT TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR WORLD ECONOMIC COLLAPSE. ARABS WERE NOT AMERICAN INDIANS, HE TOLD SENATOR, AND NO AMOUNT OF US FORCE COULD ASSURE FLOW OF OIL.

7. KHADDAM CONTINUED THAT PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL ON ONE FRONT WOULD NOT BRING RESULTS. AIMS OF ISRAEL IN SUPPORTING THIS METHOD WERE CLEAR. SINCE RABAT, HOWEVER, ARABS HAD BEEN UNIFIED BEHIND SYRIA. REFERRING TO PAPER ON HIS DESK, KHADDAM NOTED THAT US HAD AGREED
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PROVIDE 200 LANCE BALLISTIC MISSILES TO ISRAEL AND SAID THAT GIVING ISRAEL SUCH ARMS WAS NOT THE WAY TO PEACE.

8. IN RESPONSE TO SENATOR'S QUESTION WHETHER SYRIA AGREED WITH STEP-BY STEP APPROACH SO LONG AS IT MEANT STEPS ON ALL FRONTS OR WHETHER SYRIA THOUGHT TIME HAD COME TO GO TO GENEVA, KHADDAM

SAID SYRIA THOUGHT TIME HAD COME TO GO TO GENEVA. EIGHTH YEAR OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF SYRIAN TERRITORY HAD NOW BEGUN AND WHO COULD TELL HOW MUCH LONGER STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH MIGHT TAKE. REPLYING TO ANOTHER QUESTION, KHADDAM CHARACTERIZED SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON AS VERY DANGEROUS BOTH BECAUSE IT SHOWED ISRAELIS HAD NOT LEARNED LESSONS OF OCTOBER 1973 AND BECAUSE IT COULD EASILY ESCALATE INTO GENERAL EXPLOSION OF SITUATION. SYRIA AND REST OF ARAB NATION COULD NOT STAND BY INDEFINITELY, HE SAID.

9. COMMENT. KHADDAM WAS CALM AND CORDIAL THOUGHOUT CONVERSATION. HE CAREFULLY AVOIDED REPLYING TO SENATOR'S REFERENCE TO SYRIAN JEWS AND SHOWED RESTRAINT ON SUBJECTS SUCH AS NEW US ARMS DELIVERIES TO ISRAEL WHICH HAVE AT TIMES IN PAST PROVOKED EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS. HE DECLINED TO GIVE SENATOR ANY "MESSAGES" FOR ISRAELI LEADERS AND THROUGHOUT DEMONSTRATED THOROUGH MISTRUST OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS. SYRIA'S OWN DEMANDS FOR COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED SYRIAN TERRITORY AND JUSTICE FOR PALESTINIANS WERE ADAMANTLY AND SIMPLY STATED. AT SAME TIME, KHADDAM STRESSED SYRIA'S DESIRE FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH US AND HIS HOPE THAT SENATOR MATHIAS, ALONG WITH OTHER SENATORS, WOULD VISIT SYRIA AGAIN IN FUTURE.
MURPHY

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